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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General says Iraqi acceptance of Soviet peace plan including its withdrawal from Kuwait and reference to prisoners of war is "extremely encouraging".

- Representative of Iraq says Kuwaiti charges of human rights violations by his country inside Kuwait are "false and cheap fabrications".

- United Nations Development Programme Administrator establishes Gulf task force to formulate development plan in post-war period.

- Anti-Apartheid Committee expresses "grave concern" over assassination of African National Congress lawyer and calls for independent investigation.

- Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights is appointed Secretary-General of 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar this morning commented on the reported acceptance by Iraq of the Soviet peace plan which was presented earlier this week in Moscow to Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz by President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The Secretary-General told correspondents upon arriving at the United Nations that he thought the plan deserved very serious consideration. Some points were "extremely encouraging", he said, such as the fact that Iraq had confirmed its determination to withdraw from Kuwaiti territory, and the reference to prisoners of war. It was now up to the Security Council to consider the proposal as a whole, he said.

Asked for his reaction to the fact that the United States already had said that it did not find the plan acceptable, Mr. Perez de Cuellar replied that all countries had the right "to express some reservation". He stressed that so far nobody had rejected the plan outright, and that in itself proved

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the seriousness with which all countries were considering the proposal. The Secretary-General added that everything must be done to save human lives.

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The Human Rights Commission, continuing its debate in Geneva on the human rights situation in occupied Kuwait, last night heard a statement by the representative of Iraq, Shamil Mohammed.

In reply to Kuwaiti accusations earlier yesterday that Iraq would not allow humanitarian organizations into Kuwait, Mr. Mohammed told the Commission that his country was the "victim of a campaign of lies" that had harnessed the United Nations against the country.

He went on to say that when "the Atlantic Zionist and imperialist alliance" failed to starve Iraq, they had turned to military action. Mr. Mohammed described charges of human rights violation of Iraq as false and cheap fabrications, absolutely without truth. The allegations, he said, had come from the former rulers of Kuwait, who were ready to see the world burn in order to return to power. Certain isolated incidents had occurred and Iraq had taken action to ensure the security of people and property in Kuwait, he said.

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The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), William H. Draper III, has announced the establishment of a UNDP Gulf task force to help formulate a UNDP action plan for development in the post-war period. Addressing the organizational session of the Agency's Governing Council on Monday, Mr. Draper said the main challenge for the United Nations was to link the issues of peace, security and development in the post-war period and, by so doing, to heal the wounds of war.

Today, preliminary ideas for such action were elaborated in a statement by Mohamed A. Nour, Assistant Administrator and Regional Director, Bureau for Arab States and Europe. He identified areas of possible UNDP assistance, including the setting up of a comprehensive reporting system to assess the impact of the Gulf crisis at the country level, and support for national task forces dealing with the socio-economic reintegration of returnees. He also proposed establishing country and regional skills development programmes, which should include women, particularly in view of the increase in female-headed households, and special rehabilitation and training programmes for those disabled during the war.

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The Special Committee against Apartheid has expressed profound distress at the assassination of lawyer Bheki Mlangeni, an African National Congress (ANC) member.

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In a statement yesterday on behalf of its members, the Committee's Acting Chairman, Jai Pratap Rana of Nepal, said the method used to assassinate Mr. Mlangeni -- a bomb hidden in a tape recorder -- suggested the work of the notorious death squads. It should be recalled, he added, that Mr. Mlangeni, along with other lawyers, had been investigating the activities of death squads inside and outside South Africa.

The Committee went on to say that the incident was a cause for grave concern since it had come at a time when the South African authorities and ANC had reached substantial agreements on the release of political prisoners and the return of exiles.

There was no doubt, he said, that forces existed in South Africa which were opposed to the ongoing process of change and would use violent methods to derail it. The Special Committee, therefore, considered it imperative, as a measure to restore public confidence, that an independent investigation be undertaken into the assassination of Mr. Mlangeni, he said.

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The Secretary-General has appointed the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights as Secretary-General of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. The current Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights is Jan Martenson, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

At today's noon briefing, the Secretary-General's spokeswoman made it clear that the appointment of the Secretary-General of the World Conference was by function and not by name.

In introducing the item on the World Conference at the current session of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Martenson expressed the hope that the World Conference would "consolidate the advances made, review the existing situation and chart the main direction for the future".

The World Conference, to be held in connection with the forty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, will deal with a review of the progress made in the field of human rights. It will also examine ways and means to improve implementation of existing human rights standards and instruments.

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